

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY MBABANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8708

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, SEDU, PFOR, BC, LT, WZ

SUBJ: BREAK-UP OF UBLs

REF: A. MASERU 1120 B. MASERU 1114 C. LONDON 16136

D. GABORONE 1435

1. SUMMARY- GOS OFFICIALS ARE BEHAVING AS THOUGH UBLs IS DEFINITELY DEAD AND ARE MAKING ARRANGEMENTS TO CARRY ON A JOINT UNIVERSITY WITH BOTSWANA. END SUMMARY.

2. ON OCTOBER 21, GOS ATTORNEY GENERAL ISSUED A STATEMENT COMMENTING ON GOL ACTION TO "BREAK-UP THE 12 YEAR OLD UBLs". THIS STATEMENT REVIEWS BRIEFLY THE CONTROVERSY OVER V.C. ROGERS, INCLUDING REFERENCE TO UNSUCCESSFUL "SUMMIT MEETING" IN MBABANE SEPTEMBER 4. STATEMENT ALSO LISTS REASONS FOR ITS OPPOSITION TO ROGERS. GIVEN ATTITUDE OF GOL, STATEMENTS SAYS, AND INTERDICT AGAINST ROGERS, UNIVERSITY COUNCIL DECIDED HE SHOULD MOVE TO SWAZILAND. GOS STATEMENT ALSO STATES THAT GOL HIGH COURT DISCHARGED THE INTERDICT AGAINST ROGERS, WITH COSTS TO BE PAID BY GOL. WHILE COURT WAS STILL IN SESSION,
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GOL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PASSED A BILL NATIONALIZING THE ROMA

CAMPUS. GOL ACTION BRINGS TO AN END THE UBLS. STATEMENT CONCLUDES THAT STEPS ARE PRESENTLY BEING CONSIDERED TO PROTECT STUDENTS AND STAFF.

3. CHARGE MET WITH GOS MINISTER OF EDUCATION, DR. P.S.P. DLAMINI OCTOBER 22 TO DISCUSS UBLS BREAK-UP. DLAMINI SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM WAS DEVOLUTION, WHICH GOL HAD CONSISTENTLY OPPOSED, AND THAT EXTENSION OF ROGERS CONTRACT HAD SIMPLY BEEN THE EXCUSE. MINISTER SAID THAT HE AND HIS PREMSEC, E.V. DLAMINI, ACCOMPANIED BY ATTORNEY GENERAL COHEN, WERE LEAVING FOR BOTSWANA TODAY (OCTOBER 22) FOR MEETINGS WITH BOTSWANA COUNTERPARTS ON OCTOBER 23 AND 24. HE MENTIONED THAT THERE WERE MANY DIFFICULT ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS TO BE RESOLVED, INCLUDING STATUS OF FACULTY AND STUDENTS AT ROMA CAMPUS, RECENT GOS PAYMENT TO UBLS ACCOUNT IN LESOTHO, AND ADMINISTRATION OF JC EXAMS. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT REACTION OF DONORS TO BREAK-UP OF UBLS AND INDICATED THAT BOTSWANA AND SWAZI OFFICIALS WOULD BE DISCUSSING THE SITUATION WITH THEM AFTER MEETINGS IN GABORONE.

4. THE GOS ACCOUNT OF WHAT HAS HAPPENDED DURING PAST FEW WEEKS NATURALLY DIFFERS SOMEWHAT FROM THAT GIVEN IN REF B. ACCORDING TO GOS SOURCES, AN INFORMAL UNDERSTANDING HAD BEEN REACHED AT OCTOBER 6 MEETING THAT ROGERS WOULD STEP DOWN SOME TIME DURING CURRENT ACADEMIC YEAR (SEE MBABANE 1735). (ALTHOUGH ROGERS HIMSELF NEVER MADE A CLEAR-CUT COMMITTMENT TO LEAVE, THE GENERAL FEELING WAS THAT THIS COULD HAVE BEEN ARRANGED). IN EXCHANGE, GOL HAD AGREED TO WITHDRAW ITS INTERDICT AGAINST ROGERS. WHEN IT DID NOT DO SO, UNIVESITY COUNCIL, BACKED BY BOTSWANA AND SWAZILAND, FELT IT HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO CONTEST LESOTHO'S ACTION IN COURT TO ESTABLISH THE PRINCIPLE THAT THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL, NOT GOL, WAS RUNNING THE UNIVERSITY. THE GOL, KNOWING THAT ITS LEGAL POSITION WAS UNTENABLE AND UNWILLING TO HAVE ROGERS CONTINUE EVEN FOR ONE YEAR, CUT THE GORDIAN KNOT BY NATIONALIZING THE ROMA CAMPUS.
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